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Community Response to Terrorism: The South Korean Model

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INSTITUTE FOR DEFENSE ANALYSES

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**Community Response to Terrorism:
The South Korean Model**

Kongdan Oh Hassig

PREFACE

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COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO TERRORISM: THE SOUTH KOREAN MODEL

SUMMARY

IN SEARCH OF A MODEL

Terrorists often come and live among us, the better to plan and execute their attacks; the ideal model of community defense against terrorism might be a medieval walled castle town with a small population that could be closely watched. Can terrorists be distinguished from ordinary law-abiding citizens?

In our day, how can we defend the community from terrorists? How do we define the modern American community so that it can be defended, not unlike the medieval fortress town? How should community surveillance be organized to detect threatening behavior and communicate that behavior to the authorities? What indicators of danger should observers look for? What cost to life, livelihood, and liberty are we willing to bear to mount such a surveillance effort?

Another, more contemporary, model for terrorist prevention is the modern state that has experience fighting terrorism. This paper discusses the applicability of counter-terrorism methods in one such country—the Republic of Korea, or South Korea—to contemporary American society.

TERRORISM IN SOUTH KOREA

Ever since the division of the Korean peninsula at the conclusion of the Second World War, South Koreans have lived with real and imagined threats from communist North Korea (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or DPRK). The authorities have been unable to prevent all North Korean terrorist attacks, but over the years South Koreans have gained an increasing feeling of security, society has become more democratized, and North Korean terrorism has markedly diminished.

In the 1960s through the 1980s—the period under examination—South Korean efforts to combat terrorism relied on three lines of defense. First, an authoritarian government kept firm control over Korean society. Second, the police and the ROK army were visibly deployed throughout civilian society. The focus of this report is the third line of defense: the tight social organization of South Korean society.

COUNTER-TERRORISM IN AUTHORITARIAN SOUTH KOREA

The Terrorists

Although the Demilitarized Zone blocks land access to South Korea, North Korean agents have had little difficulty getting into and out of South Korea by boat. But once inside South Korea, North Korean agents have to negotiate checkpoints set up by South Korea's police and military forces and avoid attracting attention in the South's tightly organized neighborhoods.

The Police, the Military, and the National Security Law

South Korean police and agents of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA) had broad powers to stop and search people in public and even to enter their homes. Every Korean adult had an identification record that listed personal and family history, and criminal history, although the record did not carry a photograph or a fingerprint.

The National Security Law (NSL) authorizes South Korean authorities to search and detain those suspected of being North Korean agents or sympathizers. Article 4 of the NSL provides for rewards and compensation (for injury or death) for those civilians who assist in apprehending anti-state (i.e., North Korean) agents.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the South Korean military was omnipresent in South Korean society, manning roadblocks and checkpoints. The Defense Security Command worked closely with the KCIA and police to track down North Korean agents the military was backed by a US military presence in that country.

The Neighborhood

The government's eyes and ears were not only the spies of its police organizations, but the civilian population as well, organized as neighborhood watches. It was the duty of all citizens to notify the authorities of any suspicions of pro-communist activity. Posters plastered in public meeting places, on trains and buses and on telephone poles, warned that North Korean agents were lurking everywhere, and offered clues (of questionable value) for identifying them.

The neighborhood watch units were based on the Korean tradition of community self-help, reaching at least as far back as the Koryo dynasty of the 12th and 13th centuries. The elected head of the neighborhood organizations, or "Bans," reminded residents to be on the lookout for newcomers and strangers.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE KOREAN AND AMERICAN CASES

Korean society of the 1960s and 1970s differed in important respects from American society of the early 21st century. Koreans live close together and are far more culturally and ethnically homogeneous. Korea's history of living with threat and war has made their people immune to crisis thinking and accepting of counter-terrorism measures. Koreans are tolerant of the local and central government playing a role in their lives.

HOW DO THE DIFFERENCES MATTER?

North Korean agents were largely indistinguishable by appearance, and had to be profiled by behavior, which is a less obvious indicator. On the other hand, since most Koreans shared the same culture, differences in behavior stood out. In the heterogeneous American society, profiling by appearance and behavior provides an inordinate number of targets, the vast majority of them false positives.

Furthermore, Koreans don't need to be taught how to form neighborhood groups and watch over each other. In individualist America, the very idea of spying on your neighbors is considered an invasion of privacy.

A DIRECTION FOR COMMUNITY DEFENSE

The following tentative proposals, modeled on those that South Koreans used for years, go against the long-standing American tradition of individualism and suspicion of government, and consequently are not likely to be accepted by most Americans at this time. However, if more large-scale terrorist attacks against American targets occur, Americans may consider adopting more drastic counter-terrorism measures. A community response system requires that communities have boundaries that define the duties and limits of neighborhood responsibility for counter-terrorism. Profiling is the most efficient guide to successful surveillance, even though profiling on certain dimensions is politically incorrect, and in fact may be illegal in some contexts. Top-down, guidelines and alerts can be issued by higher levels of the surveillance system. Bottom-up, people can draw their own inferences based on their experience with what is normal for their neighborhood. People can also build their profiles based on media reports of terrorism activity.

Although closer community cooperation goes against the grain of American individualism, the reality to be faced is that a large proportion of Americans live in cities with high population density, and the optimal social behavior in such environments may not be individualism, but collective social responsibility.

COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO TERRORISM: THE SOUTH KOREAN MODEL

*This precious stone set in the silver sea
Which serves it in the office of a wall,
Or as a moat defensive to a house,
Against the envy of less happier lands.*

-Shakespeare's *Richard II*, Act 2, Scene 2

IN SEARCH OF A MODEL

Terrorists come and live among us, the better to plan and execute their attacks. Several of the 9/11 terrorists were long-time residents of the United States, others entered the country shortly before their mission was to begin.¹ In their period of planning and preparation, terrorists can be potential objects of suspicion and apprehension, the more so when their plans require a large quantity of materials or many personnel. In the fight against terrorism, can terrorists be distinguished from ordinary law-abiding citizens?

The ideal model of community defense against terrorism might be found in the 14th century England of Richard II. In those days, it was possible to find walled castle towns protecting a small population. In these towns, travelers would come and go, but strangers were likely to be noticed sooner rather than later.

The fortress town as a model of counter-terrorism raises a number of questions about community defense for the United States in the 21st century. First, how do we define the modern American community in such a way that it could be defended like a walled town? Where are the boundaries? Second, how should community surveillance be organized to detect threatening behavior and communicate its presence to the proper authorities? Third, what indicators of danger should observers be on the lookout for? And fourth, what cost to life, livelihood, and liberty are we willing to bear in order to mount such a detection effort? Although Shakespeare was thinking of something else, the dangers of ignoring this trade-off between security and convenience are reflected in the final lines of the above-cited Shakespeare passage: "That England that was wont to conquer others/Hath made a shameful conquest of itself."

The subject of this paper is a model for terrorist prevention: the modern state that has experienced terrorism. There are many such states—Columbia, Northern Ireland, and Israel among others, and the Republic of Korea (ROK, or South Korea). South Korea's

¹ The case of the 9/11 hijackers living in San Diego is described in a *Washington Post* article by Amy Goldstein and William Booth entitled "Hijackers Found Welcome Mat on West Coast," December 29, 2001, p. A1/A14.

battle against terrorists in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s will be examined for clues on how to combat terrorism in the United States today.

TERRORISM IN SOUTH KOREA

Ever since the division of the Korean peninsula at the conclusion of the World War II, South Koreans have lived with real and imagined threats from communist North Korea (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or DPRK). The Korean War strengthened and substantiated these threats, showing how far the North Koreans were willing to go to communize the southern half of the peninsula.

The North Koreans have exercised the full range of terrorist methods, from clandestine political activities to mass destruction (if the military activities of the Korean War are counted as a logical extension of terrorism). But, at the outset, it must be acknowledged that the spread of terror among the civilian South Korean population was rarely the goal of North Korean terrorist operations. Although these operations may resemble those of terrorist operations in other states— kidnapping, bombing, and assassination— the goal of most of these incidents was the incremental achievement of specific political ends, such as the elimination of South Korean political figures or gaining access to strategic information, rather than the actual destabilization of South Korean society by spreading fear. It is an open question whether a secondary goal of North Korean terrorism was to provoke the South Korean government into adopting such draconian policies that it would alienate the South Korean people. Most of the ROK government's policies of political oppression, which were designed to ensure the continuance of whatever military regime was in power, probably would have been adopted even in the absence of North Korean threat, but the excuse of fighting communism was a convenient cover for successive authoritarian government.

On the other hand, the goal of the 9/11 terrorists, at least those who attacked the World Trade Center, was to attack and terrorize the civilian population. A second and related difference between the historical South Korean and the contemporary American cases is that North Korean terrorists never tried to kill large numbers of South Koreans (except as part of their Korean War military actions, when South Korean government officials were murdered by invading North Korean troops). Notwithstanding these two differences, the methods of operation that North Koreans used over the years are similar to the methods of modern-day terrorists in the United States and other countries.

SOME EXAMPLES

Consider the following: From 1951 to 1982, South Korean authorities captured or killed 4,146 people believed to be North Korean agents. Every year in the 1960s, an average of 169 agents were discovered; half of them were killed. In the 1970s, an average of 68 per year were discovered, and about one-third of them were killed. By the 1990s, an average of less than 10 per year were discovered. It is not known how many agents went undetected, although an estimate that has received some currency in South Korean society is that no more than one-fifth of the North Korean agents are ever caught; most of those are caught while engaging in spying or agitation activities, although some are engaged in more destructive behavior.

On February 16, 1958, a Korean National Air passenger plane was hijacked to North Korea. On board were a Korean congressman, three US military officers, and 27 Korean civilians. Eight of the civilians were detained and executed in North Korea on charges of espionage. In May 1967, a North Korean spy ring operating out of East Berlin was broken up. The agents had contacted over 200 South Korean scholars and students living in Germany, urging them to defect. During this period, North Korean agents were also kidnapping Japanese in Europe and in their homeland. On January 21, 1968, a 31-man North Korean commando team disguised as South Korean soldiers and civilians attacked the South Korean presidential mansion. Twenty-seven agents were killed, one was captured, and three escaped. Two days later, North Korean navy boats and MiGs captured the US spy ship *Pueblo*, keeping the ship (which is on display as a victory trophy in Pyongyang) and releasing the crew a year later. In October 1968, 120 North Korean commandos landed on the east coast of South Korea. Over the next two months, 110 were killed, seven captured, and three managed to escape. On December 11, 1969, a North Korean agent hijacked a South Korean passenger plane to North Korea, with 47 passengers and a crew of four. Thirty-nine of the passengers were returned to the South, but the remaining passengers and the crew have never been heard from.

On June 22, 1970, two North Korean agents tried to assassinate the South Korean president by planting a bomb at the National Cemetery, but the bomb detonated prematurely killing one of the agents. On August 15, 1974, Korean Liberation Day, a North Korean agent coming from Japan shot at President Park Chung-hee at the National Theater in Seoul, missing him but killing his wife. From 1974 to 1990, four North Korean tunnels under the DMZ were discovered, large enough for troops and vehicles to pass through in a southward invasion. It is assumed that there are numerous undiscovered tunnels.

Although the number of terrorist incidents declined after the 1970s, two horrific attacks were carried out in the 1980s. On October 9, 1983, three North Korean agents planted a bomb at the Martyrs' Mausoleum in Rangoon. The explosion killed 17 visiting ROK officials, including several cabinet members, the prime minister, and the president's national security advisor, but missed killing the president who arrived late for the ceremonies. The bomb also killed four Burmese and wounded 37. And on November 29, 1987, two North Korean agents planted a bomb on board a Korean Airlines Boeing 707 flying from Baghdad to Seoul, with a stop in Abu Dhabi. The agents disembarked in Abu Dhabi, and the plane blew up over the Andaman Sea off Burma, killing all 115 on board. The agents swallowed poison capsules when they were captured in Bahrain, but one of them survived and later confessed that the bombing, ordered by Kim Jong-il, was meant to discourage tourists and athletes from attending the Seoul Olympics in September 1988. This most destructive of all North Korean attacks is also the one that most closely fits the definition of pure terrorism, and in fact was cited as the reason for adding the DPRK to the US list of terrorism-sponsoring states.

Throughout the 1990s, North Korean agents continued to be captured in South Korea, although news of their arrests was downplayed to avoid damaging President Kim Dae-jung's "sunshine" engagement policy toward North Korea. The most newsworthy incidents involved water-borne intrusions and beach landings by North Korean mini-submarines and semi-submersible spy boats, and clashes between North and South Korean patrol boats in West Sea waters claimed by South Korea. In most of these intrusions, North Koreans were either killed or committed suicide to prevent their capture. South Korean soldiers and civilians also were frequently killed in the encounters.

A notable assassination, attributed on good evidence to North Korean agents, was the murder on February 14, 1997 of a nephew of Kim Jong-il's wife. Li Il-nam (also known as Lee Han-yong) had defected to South Korea in 1982, changed his appearance through plastic surgery, and was living incognito in Seoul. He was killed outside his apartment just three days after the defection of a very high-ranking North Korean official and his aide, leading to the widespread speculation that the killing was meant as a warning to the recently defected official, and to others who might try to defect. Mr. Lee had told authorities that he was being followed, but his warnings were neglected in the atmosphere of engagement that prevailed under the Kim Dae-jung government.

South Korean authorities have been unable to prevent all North Korean terrorist attacks, but given the proximity of North Korea, the number of North Korean agents operating in the South, and the similar language, culture, and appearance of those agents,

South Korea's anti-terrorism efforts must be judged to be relatively successful. And despite these attacks, over the years South Koreans have gained an increased sense of security, and successive governments have become more democratic and more relaxed in their anti-terrorism campaigns. Nor have foreign tourists or business people been deterred by these attacks, either during the Seoul Olympics or after.

LINES OF DEFENSE

South Korean efforts to combat terrorism from the 1960s through the 1980s relied on three lines of defense. First, an authoritarian government kept firm control over Korean society. Whereas many of the authoritarian measures taken by the government were covertly designed to prevent the rise of domestic political opponents, these measures overtly targeted North Korean terrorists. A second was provided by the South Korean military. Well-trained and tough-acting soldiers and police were visibly deployed throughout civilian society. The military was used by the authoritarian governments of former generals Park Chung-hee (1961–1979), Chun Doo-hwan (1980–1987), and to a much lesser extent Roh Tae-woo (1988–1993) both to suppress domestic political opponents and to catch North Korean agents.

The third line of defense was the organization itself of South Korean society. This organization can best be described as tight—so tight that it presented difficulties for North Korean agents to operate in, even though the agents often blended well into South Korean society and found political sympathizers to support them.

COUNTER-TERRORISM IN SOUTH KOREA

The Terrorists

In many ways, the two Koreas have grown apart over the years. Through the 1960s and 1970s, the economy of the North kept up with, initially even surpassing, that of the South, but by the 1980s the flaws of the socialist command economy were taking their toll, and the North fell behind. By the end of the 1980s, North Koreans were poor relative to the South Koreans, and North Korean defectors who fled south were practically lost in the South's vibrant market society. They had trouble understanding the South Korean dialect with its many borrowed foreign terms, and they lacked the initiative and experience to prosper in South Korean society.

During the 1970s, the North and South Korean people were similar. The Northerners spoke a somewhat different dialect in terms of word choice and pronunciation (unless they received intensive training), but many southerners, having

originally come down from the North after the communist takeover but before the border was closed, also spoke, or at least *could* speak, this dialect. Thus, North Korean agents did not find it too difficult to pass for Southerners.

Getting into the South was complicated by the fact that the DMZ is almost impenetrable, and until the 1980s, travel into and out of South Korea was restricted by the government. South Koreans had difficulty securing a passport for foreign travel. But Korea has 8,700 miles of coastline around the peninsula, and another 8,600 miles of coastline around its 30,000 islands, with well over half of that coastline in South Korea. Much of it is rugged and sparsely inhabited, thereby providing a convenient entry point for small North Korean boats, which are often launched from a mother ship. Thanks to this extended coastline, North Korean agents have had little difficulty getting into and out of South Korea despite the South Korean authorities' precautions of posting sentries along the beaches and smoothing the beach sand, the better to reveal the footprints of any sea-borne intruders who might arrive the following night. Once inside South Korea, North Korean agents still have to negotiate military checkpoints and avoid attracting attention in the South's tightly-organized neighborhoods.

The Police

Although pickpockets, house burglars, and confidence tricksters are relatively common in South Korea (more so in the past), crimes such as murder, rape, and drug dealing have always been rare. Because the most important task of the national police and the provincial/city police has been to apprehend North Korean agents, the South Korean authoritarian governments through the 1980s gave police broad powers to stop and search people in public, and even to enter their homes.

Even more important than the national police in apprehending North Korean agents was the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA), taking its English name from its US counterpart. The Korean name was *Joongang Jongbobu*, shorted to "*Joongjong*." The KCIA, established in 1961 after General Park became president, was tasked with apprehending North Korean agents and arresting South Korean citizens who opposed Park's dictatorial rule. The KCIA was hated by most South Koreans, and even after changing its name to the Agency for National Security Planning, or ANSP (*Anjon Gihoekbu* or "*Angibu*") in 1981, it continued to be viewed with fear and loathing. In 1998, under the largely democratic government of President Kim Dae-jung, the ANSP shed much of its former notoriety when it became the National Intelligence Service

(*Kukka Jongbowon* or “*Kukjongwon*”), with much curtailed powers explicitly directed toward foreign (i.e., North Korean) rather than domestic targets.

It was not too difficult for the police to identify individuals, even though about a third of all Koreans have the family name of “Kim” (with another 12 percent each named “Lee” and “Park”). Every Korean adult has a unique identification record that lists personal and family history, and criminal history. This record, copied on letter-size paper, is required for all legal transactions, as well as employment purposes. Because the record includes information about the individual’s home town, background checks can be made to help identify an individual; foreigners have some difficulty proving their identity. In the 1960s and 1970s the identification card did not carry a photograph or fingerprint, although today it does.

The National Security Law

The law that authorizes South Korean authorities to search and detain those suspected of being North Korean agents or sympathizers is the National Security Law (NSL). In its 1991 revised form, its stated objectives are to regulate anti-state activities that might harm national security, thereby protecting national security and the peoples’ welfare, life, and freedom. An anti-state organization is defined as any domestic or overseas organization that attempts to destroy the ROK state or its security. North Korea is not mentioned in the NSL, but is considered to be the most threatening anti-state organization. Article 2 lists the following actions as prohibited by the NSL:

- Formation of anti-state organizations or engaging in anti-state activities
- Providing voluntary support for such organizations or activities
- Acts of infiltration and intrusion
- Praising or offering encouragement for anti-state organizations or activities
- Holding meetings or engaging in communications for anti-state causes
- Offering facilities or material support for anti-state causes
- Failing to report anti-state organizations or activities to the authorities.

Article 4 of the NSL provides for rewards and compensation (for injury or death) for those civilians who assist in apprehending anti-state agents. The amount of reward and/or compensation is determined on a case-by-case basis by the president’s office.

The ROK Military

In the 1960s and 1970s, the South Korean military, primarily the army, was omnipresent in South Korean society, manning checkpoints in the city and countryside. Especially under the Chun Doo-whan administration (1980-1987), the Defense Security Command (of which he had been the head) worked closely with the KCIA and police to track down North Korean agents (and, of course, political critics and opponents of Chun's administration).

The South Korean military was backed by US troops. In the chaotic political period immediately following the Japanese surrender in 1945, US troops that arrived to supervise the handover of political administration from the colonial Japanese to the South Koreans supported the purges of communist and socialist elements conducted by the South Korean police. This anti-communist posture continued throughout the cold war, complicated by the fact that successive authoritarian Korean administrations resorted to labeling all their political opponents as communist sympathizers.

In May 1980, South Korean army units were withdrawn from the operational control of the Combined Forces Command— at that time under the command of a US general— and sent to the southern city of Kwangju to suppress a pro-democracy uprising (doubtless fueled to a minor extent by communists or communist sympathizers). Hundreds or perhaps even thousands of protesters were killed. A large segment of the South Korean population has never forgiven the Americans for what they saw as tacit American support for the authoritarian military government of General Chun, who had recently taken power in a coup.

The Neighborhood

The local and national police, the KCIA, and the army were the arms that the South Korean government used to catch North Korean agents. The government's eyes and ears, the spies of these organizations, was the civilian population, organized as neighborhood watches. According to the provisions of the National Security Law, it was the duty of all citizens to keep their eyes open and relay suspicions of pro-communist activity to the proper authorities. In order to facilitate this reporting, the government provided some organization at the neighborhood level, but the basis of the neighborhood watch system was already in place thanks to Korea's traditional rural Confucian culture.

Until the 1990s, South Koreans were educated from childhood to be on guard against communism and North Korean agents. In grammar school, "morals and ethics"

classes used the *BarunSaenghwal* [Morally Correct Life] series of texts to teach students how to be good citizens, and at each grade there were one or two chapters on how to “live and die” for their country. In the chapter on North Korea, students were told that (1) communism is bad, (2) North Korean communists in particular are bad, (3) North Korean agents are always trying to penetrate South Korean society, and (4) all South Koreans, including children, must defend the nation against the North Koreans, taking the initiative even if others fail to do their civic duty. These lessons were illustrated with stories about the depredations of North Korean soldiers during the Korean War.

Anti-North Korean posters were plastered in public meeting places, on trains and buses, and on telephone poles. The posters had eye-catching messages and cartoon figures warning that North Korean agents were lurking everywhere. The posters offered clues for identifying the agents, including their strange vocabulary, shifty manner, frequent questions about South Korean society, and penchant for taking photographs. Informants were given a telephone number to report their suspicions to the authorities, and offered a reward for information leading to the apprehension of North Korean agents. Whether these clues were really useful in distinguishing agents from ordinary inquisitive, photo-taking South Korean citizens is difficult to tell.

Occasional news reports of the detection of North Korean agents by alert citizens lent credibility to the citizen watch program. For example, there was the famous noodle restaurant case of the late 1970s. At that time, a special noodle dish called “Sapporo ramen” was sweeping the country. A couple entered a downtown Seoul restaurant and awkwardly tried to order the noodle dish that so many people were eating. Not knowing the name, they pointed to a nearby table and asked the waiter to bring them the noodle dish the other people were eating. When the waiter said, “Ah, Sapporo ramen, is that what you want?” the couple were unable to repeat the name, and simply said, “Yes, that noodle.” Hearing them, two female college students at a nearby table began to giggle and speculate that they looked like North Korean “commies.” The more they looked at the couple, the more convinced they became; they called the police, who picked up the couple and subsequently discovered that they indeed were North Korean agents who had entered the country so recently they were unaware of the latest noodle soup fad.

In the countryside, school students were taught to carefully observe people moving around early in the morning and late at night (the country was under a midnight to 5 AM curfew until the mid-1980s). North Korean agents were known to use wireless transmitters, which were so noisy that they had to be used at a good distance from public

areas. And, in those days, before Koreans became health-conscious, hiking in the mountains or fields was almost unheard of. Someone who was not a farmer had no business being out early or late in the day. It seems that a little boy, whose house was near the mountains, walked his dog early in the morning and would occasionally see a middle-aged man go into the mountains. One day the boy followed and saw him talking into a radio that he had retrieved from under a fallen log. The boy reported his suspicions to police, who arrested the North Korean agent in the act of transmitting a radio message. The boy received a large reward, but his family left the area out of fear that other North Korean agents would seek revenge.

In South Korea, the neighborhood watch units that were employed to detect North Korean agents were based on the Korean tradition of community self-help, reaching at least as far back as the Koryo dynasty of the 12th and 13th centuries. A Korean city is divided into districts (Gu), then neighborhoods or villages (Dong), then streets (Ga), then mini-neighborhoods (Dong) and finally mini-units (Ban). In 2000, Seoul, with over 10 million residents, had 25 Gu and 522 Dong. To take an example, the author's family used to live in Dobong Gu, Sangmun Dong, house number 22 on First Street, which was in 2-Dong, 5-Ban. The latter two designations do not appear on postal addresses, but are solely for organizational purposes.

A Dong has 100-150 households, and a Ban has 20-30 households. Apartment dwellers are organized into Dong and Ban as well, with a large building having more than one Dong, and a single floor of a large building having apartments in two or more Ban. Each Ban has a leader called the *Banjangnim* (honorable Ban leader) informally chosen by the Ban households to serve an open-ended term. Once a month, it is the Ban leader's duty to invite a representative from each household for a social gathering, with light refreshments. At the meeting, the leader relays any special notices or instructions that have been received from local and central government authorities; for example, that there has been an increase in pick-pocketing at the local market and consequently everyone should exercise increased vigilance, or that the president of a foreign country will be coming to Seoul and passing by their neighborhood, so all the residents should beautify their homes and hang out their Korean flags on the appointed day (all Korean homes are required to own a national flag).

The Ban leader is also responsible for reminding households of their ordinary neighborhood obligations, such as observing parking restrictions on the street, planting a tree on National Arbor Day, and preventing the theft of trees planted on National Arbor Day. In regard to counter-terrorism in the 1960s through the 1980s, Ban households were

reminded always to be on the lookout for newcomers or strangers in their neighborhood, especially during planting and harvest seasons, when migrant workers might pass through the town.

The Korean neighborhood watch, although more structured than similar watches found in the United States, was not strictly organized or enforced. Many Ban leaders, who were not paid for their work but sometimes received small favors from local government officials, devoted little attention to their duties. Others were more conscientious, and still others used their office to gain a measure of power over their neighbors. Although Ban meetings were more like voluntary social gatherings than official meetings, they provided a useful link between the government and the citizens. The communication functions of the Ban meetings were more important before every household had a telephone and a television.

It is difficult to find any statistics documenting the usefulness of neighborhood organizations for apprehending North Korean agents, although anecdotal evidence was occasionally published in the press. When President Kim Dae-jung inaugurated an engagement policy toward North Korea in 1998, the South Korean government began to virtually ignore the issue of North Korean agents. But statistics would not tell the whole story of the effectiveness of South Korean counter-terrorism measures because these measures may have curtailed terrorist activities or even deterred North Korean agents from coming to South Korea.

In addition to ordinary citizens, three neighborhood institutions kept an eye out for trouble. Every neighborhood had a small branch police station, with foot-patrol officers who knew everyone in the neighborhood. There were also many branch fire stations to provide a government presence in the neighborhoods. And most neighborhoods had a local real estate office, which often became an informal meeting place to share information. As part of its security program, the government expected all business establishments and public buildings to be guarded by at least one night watchman, thus ensuring that “the city never sleeps.”

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE KOREAN AND AMERICAN CASES

Korean society of the 1960s and 1970s differs in several important respects from American society of the early 21st century, making the applicability of South Korean counter-terrorism measures somewhat problematic. One obvious difference is Korea’s size, both in terms of land area and population. South Korea is one-hundredth the size of the United States in land area and has only 17 percent as large a population (in 2000).

South Korea's population density is 475 people per square kilometer (one of the highest in the world), compared to 29 people per square kilometer in the United States. The Korean people not only live close together, but they are far more culturally and ethnically homogeneous than are Americans, which makes living close together less stressful. Some cultural and language differences do exist between regions within South Korea (and between those regions and regions of North Korea), but the differences are not great.

Cultural differences among Koreans become more distinct when a comparison is made across generations. Throughout most of South Korea's history, the college students were the ones who actively voiced opposition to authoritarian governments, thereby themselves labeled as "pro-communist." The students were also more easily influenced by North Korean propaganda than were the older people, even going so far as to embrace their North Korean comrades, and in some cases providing support for North Korean agents. By the 1990s, this difference between generations was reinforced by the youngsters' lack of experience with the North Korean invasion of the Korean War. In an opinion survey published on January 10, 2003 by the government's ministry of unification, 94 percent of the youngsters said they would welcome North Koreans as their next-door neighbors, and 90 percent said they would like to make friends with North Koreans, compared to only 85 percent who said they would like to make friends with Americans.²

A second difference between the Korean and American cases is that Koreans have always lived in a tough international neighborhood. Although Korea is surrounded on three sides by water, its fourth side adjoins North Korea, its principal enemy. To make matters worse, Seoul, with a population of over 10 million, lies within artillery range of thousands of fortified North Korean gun emplacements. And Seoul lies along a natural north-south invasion route through the mountainous peninsula. Beyond North Korea to the north, and across the water to the east and the west, lie states that historically have threatened and invaded Korea. Today, neither China, Russia, nor Japan is viewed as a threat; but neither are they viewed as allies. South Korea's only ally, the United States, lies thousands of miles away.

Korean attitudes toward terrorism and homeland security need to be viewed in the context of the threat that Korea's neighbors have long posed. It can be argued that Korea's history of threat tolerance, and its historical experiences with devastating war on

² Survey of 1,125 university and college students conducted by the ROK Ministry of Unification's research institute in early 2003, cited by Agence France Press, Hong Kong, on January 10, 2003.

its territory, have made the South Korean people immune to crisis thinking and more accepting of counter-terrorism measures. The United States, on the other hand, bounded by broad oceans and friendly neighbors, has rarely experienced an invasion threat to its homeland. Consequently, Americans are more prone to crisis thinking and have not yet come to grips with how to deal with a palpable terrorist threat.

A third difference between Koreans and Americans may be found in their respective individualist and collectivist cultures, a graphic example of which can be seen from the air. Looking down at the countryside from an airplane flying over Korea, one sees villages of walled houses. From those villages, farmers leaving the protection of their homes to go out and till their fields. Flying over the American countryside, one sees individual un-walled farm houses spread out over the land, no two within shouting distance of each other. This is the model for American urban life as well. Americans try to pretend that they are living in isolation from their neighbors, whether those neighbors live a half mile away, in the next house, or on the other side of an apartment wall.

In cities as well as villages, Koreans are relatively accepting of boundaries, and within those boundaries they have developed a high level of social responsibility. Even the arbitrary Dong and Ban units in apartment buildings have been accepted by Koreans. But in American society, even neighborhoods that have natural boundaries hardly function as a unit. A case in point is the author's current residential neighborhood of approximately 250 homes in northern Virginia. The neighborhood is laid out in a circle, with a half-dozen cross streets, and only one entrance. Yet even though this neighborhood constitutes a virtual village, separated from other neighborhoods, none of the residents seems to think of it as a separate social unit.

The traditional individualism of American culture has been translated into law, both the written law (especially the Bill of Rights), and legal interpretation of the law as reflected in public opinion. The law provides a substitute for social responsibility: rather than neighbors banding together to put social pressure on a trouble-maker, they call the police and let them deal with the problem. In time of war or national crisis (and to a lesser extent, the semi-crisis that is the war against terrorism), national security concerns tilt the balance against traditional American individual rights, but not as much as security concerns have traditionally over-ridden individual rights in Korea. It seems to be the case, however, that Koreans are becoming more individualistic and Americans are becoming more accepting of government limitations on their freedoms. Given the fact that most Americans live in dense urban environments where collectivism and social responsibility

are more conducive to community welfare than is individualism, a trend toward collectivism would hardly be surprising.

A fourth difference between Korea and the United States is the greater role that the government and the military play in Korean society. Koreans are used to central government control, formerly by kings, then by the Japanese colonialists, and through the 1980s by governments that looked very much like military dictatorships. This tolerance for central military authority contrasts with the local independence and non-military culture of the United States.

HOW DO THE DIFFERENCES MATTER?

The differences between South Korea of the 1960s to 1980s and the United States today suggest caution in drawing lessons for post-9/11 American society. South Koreans had many years to develop a defense against North Korean threats. Over the same period, people became acclimated to those threats, and, consequently, the magnitude of the threats was discounted. Moreover, North Korean agents never posed a direct threat of mass destruction to South Korean society. The North Korean threat could be viewed almost as an indigenous part of South Korean social life, the sum of many small incidents each designed to destabilize South Korean society, but none having any chance of doing so. There was no perception of a crisis. In fact, many South Koreans viewed their government's strong counter-terrorism law, the National Security Law, as over-kill, and the law's enforcement turned many people (especially students) against the government.

The fact that Koreans are more homogeneous than Americans can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, because North Koreans look pretty much like South Koreans, North Korean agents are largely indistinguishable by appearance and have to be profiled by behavior, which is a less obvious indicator than appearance. On the other hand, since most South Koreans share the same modern capitalist culture, differences in behavior stand out. In the United States, the 9/11 Arab terrorists were somewhat distinguishable by appearance and name from the majority of Americans. However, in heterogeneous American society, profiling by appearance, as well as by behavior, provides an inordinate number of targets, the vast majority of them false positives. When the number of false positives is high relative to the number of hits, people become discouraged about their ability to identify differences and it is difficult to keep them motivated to be on their guard.

An implication of the difference between Korean collectivism and American individualism is that Koreans don't need to be taught how to form neighborhood groups.

It was only necessary to establish the communication links between the neighborhood and the government in order to implement a country-wide, community-based surveillance program. In individualist America, the very idea of spying on one's neighbors, or on anyone else for that matter, is resisted by many people as an invasion of privacy. Predictably, the Justice Department's proposal to ask mail carriers, utility workers, delivery drivers, and the like to report suspicious activity under the rubric of a Terrorism Information and Prevention System, or Operation TIPS, failed to get Congressional budget approval before its scheduled pilot run in August 2002.³ Until a higher level of fear grips American society, neighborhood surveillance is likely to be resisted.

Another social difference between South Korea and the United States is that in South Korea the central government plays a stronger role than the smaller (but growing) role of the federal government in American society. If the US government wants to play a larger role in fighting terrorism, Americans will first have to be persuaded that greater government intervention in their lives is acceptable.

To summarize, Koreans' long experience with terrorists and their cultural tradition of collectivism and government oversight have provided the necessary groundwork for using the community as a first line of defense against terrorism. American individualism suggests a different way of confronting terrorism. When one American acquaintance of the author was told that she was studying how Americans can combat terrorism at the local level, he immediately assumed that the author was recommending that every household should have a gun with which to fight terrorists (just as some recommend that airline pilots should be armed). This is the typical American individualist approach, with firm roots in American history.

A DIRECTION FOR COMMUNITY DEFENSE

The following tentative proposals, modeled on those that South Koreans used for years against North Korean agents, may go against a long-standing American tradition of individualism and suspicion of government, and consequently are not likely to be accepted by most Americans at this time. However, if more large-scale terrorist attacks occur, Americans may become willing to adopt more drastic counter-terrorism measures, closer to what would be accepted during an all-out war. That is to say, people's cost-

³ The program is proposed on page 12 of the *National Strategy for Homeland Security*, Office of Homeland Security, July 2002. The program proposal's demise is reported by Dan Eggen, "Proposal to Enlist Citizen Spies Was Doomed from the Start," *The Washington Post*, November 22, 2002, p. A11.

benefit calculations may be adjusted to permit a greater trade-off of personal liberty in return for improved security.

Starting at the bottom, a community response system requires communities (of perhaps two dozen households) with territorial boundaries that define the duties and limits of neighborhood responsibility for counter-terrorism. The communities would need to be organized among apartment dwellers as well as among occupants of single-family dwellings, in ethnic as well as in middle-American neighborhoods. In rural areas, the communities might consist of no more than a dozen households.

This would be a more comprehensive version of the neighborhood watch organizations that now operate, with varying levels of participation and success, in many neighborhoods across the country.⁴ In early 2002, Attorney General John Ashcroft announced a plan to invigorate these watch programs, doubling their number to 15,000.⁵ The intention was to “weave a seamless web of prevention of terrorism that brings together citizens and law enforcement.”⁶ The neighborhood watch program also became a part of President George W. Bush’s USA Freedom Corps project. However, one year later, the watch program as a means of apprehending terrorists appeared to have gone the way of the TIPS program. The Internet link to the watch program had expired.⁷

Next is the question of what the community should be on the lookout for. Profiling is the most efficient guide to successful surveillance. Although profiling on certain dimensions is politically incorrect, and in fact may be illegal in some situations, forming profiles (that is, categorizing) dangers in the environment is a common human behavior that probably has evolutionary roots. These profiles of people and behaviors can be formed in a top-down or bottom-up fashion. Top-down, guidelines and alerts can be

⁴ The National Sheriffs’ Association sponsors a home page on neighborhood watch at <http://www.usaonwatch.org/history.asp>.

⁵ Department of Justice press release, “Attorney General Ashcroft Announces Neighborhood Watch Campaign,” March 6, 2002. Also, see Dan Eggen, “Neighborhood Watch Enlisted in Terror War,” *The Washington Post*, March 7, 2002, p. A1/A8.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ The expired description on the link at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ojpcorp/nwp.htm> began: “Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs Participates in Citizen Corps Neighborhood Watch Program. Attorney General Ashcroft announces Neighborhood Watch Campaign Expansion Initiative. The Neighborhood Watch Program is a highly successful....” A year later, Citizen Corps at <http://www.citizencorps.gov/> was also silent on the issue. Nor did either the home page of the justice department (<http://www.usdoj.gov/>) or the department of homeland security (<http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/>) mention a neighborhood watch in connection with terrorism. Instead, neighborhood programs were geared toward disaster preparedness training or traditional crime fighting.

issued by higher levels of the surveillance system (e.g., be on the lookout for five Middle Eastern-looking males who are believed to have crossed the border from Canada). Bottom-up, people can draw their own inferences based on their experience of what is normal for their environment. The Justice Department's *Citizens' Preparedness Guide* tells people, "You know what is normal for your neighborhood, workplace, and daily routines. If a behavior or an event seems to be outside the norm or is frightening, let law enforcement authorities know."⁸ People also are likely to build their profiles based on media reports of terrorism activity. Both the top-down and bottom-up approaches leave room for much profiling error, with the bottom-up approach particularly unreliable. Unfortunately, the alternative to profiling is to be on the alert for everything, which is a massively wasteful endeavor.

The community needs to be linked to the next higher level of watch. If millions of Americans begin calling in their suspicions to the FBI, as the *Citizens' Guide* recommends, the system will be overwhelmed. Between September 11, 2001, and June, 2002, the FBI received over 435,000 calls on its tip hotline, overwhelming investigators.⁹ Citizen reports need to be filtered at lower levels by people who are familiar with the community before the reports are directed to the attention of professional investigators with their centralized databases and other investigative tools. In order for leads from these databases to be matched with individuals in the community, a national identification program would be desirable. The Defense Department's Information Awareness Office, formerly under the direction of John Poindexter, has begun to research the possibility of achieving "total information awareness" through the use of massive computing power.¹⁰ This would be a counter-terrorism analog to the military's attempt to achieve total battlespace awareness.

In a large, diverse society such as the United States, there will always be many gaps through which terrorists can slip, as well as niches in which they can operate. But better surveillance has the potential to make entry into and long-term operation within American society more difficult for terrorists than it is today. The very existence of community watches may provide a deterrent against terrorism, while having the beneficial side effects of reducing other crimes and improving civic behavior in the

⁸ Department of Justice, *Citizens' Preparedness Guide*, January 2002, p. 18.

⁹ Ariana Eun Jung Cha, "Citizen Tips on Terrorists: Leads or Liabilities," *The Washington Post*, June 19, 2002, p. A8.

¹⁰ See for example, "Comment: Too Much Information," by Hendrik Hertzberg in *The New Yorker*, December 9, 2002, pp. 45-46.

neighborhood. Although closer community cooperation goes against the grain of American individualism, the reality to be faced is that a large proportion of Americans live in cities with high population density, and the optimal social behavior in such an environment may not be individualism, but collective social responsibility. The underlying goal of the community watch system is to reshape American culture to accept a new community structure.

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